#12

Essay
on
Dyspepsia

Jacob Leane
of Pennsylvania

Passed March 8th. 1823.

On

Dyspepsia

As a student cannot be expected to have it in his power to offer many new and valuable observations on a subject, which has for a long time, claimed the attention of men of the greatest genius, industry and experience, it will not be a matter of surprise, that in this treatise, little is to be found original, except the phraseology.

Dyspepsia is a disease, which is oftentimes extremely difficult and perplexing in its management. It attacks persons in every situation in Life, though it particularly selects as its victims, the studious, the unfortunate, the indolent and the intemperate.

Its symptoms are; flatulence, eructations of various kinds, pyrosis, cardialgia, gastrodynia, nausea and vomiting, a sensation of heat referred to the stomach, a gnawing sensation in the stomach especially when empty, constipation, irregular and disturbed sleep, furred tongue, the appetite is various in some cases it is voracious, in others every kind of food disgusts; in others it is depraved, soliciting most improper articles as dirt, chalk, &c. Generally there is great depression of spirits, and the

patient feels Languid and disinclined to use any kind of exertion.

Owing to the powerful sympathies of the stomach, most distressing and sometimes most alarming affections are induced. These, however, generally disappear upon a removal of the gastric disorder.

The causes of Dyspepsia are: intemperance in eating or drinking; the use of strong tea or coffee, of acids or of gross or indigestible food; the habitual and excessive use of opium, ardent spirits, bitters or aromatics; frequent vomiting; the habitual use of nitre; excess in venery; an indolent and sedentary life; grief or vexation of mind; intense study or application to business; decayed teeth and a foul mouth

Treatment. It is important that the patient should relinquish all such practices as have any agency in the production of the disease. When the disease is but slight, this will sometimes cause its removal. Anxiety or depression of mind occasioned by misfortune in business, often induces an extremely obstinate form of dyspepsia. Here we should be careful not to push our treatment too far, as while this state of mind continues, we can do little more than palliate the symptoms. In these cases, a fortunate

change in the affairs of the patient, will do more towards the cure of his complaint, than any article the Materia Medica affords.

The first indication in the treatment of this disease, is to remove all acrid and offensive matter from the stomach and bowels.

To relieve the stomach of its offending contents, we resort to an emetic. Specacuanha is to be preferred for this purpose, as it evacuates the stomach without occasioning violent vomiting. Some have thought that it possessed a peculiar power in the cure of dyspepsia.

For the purpose of evacuating the bowels, the milder Laxatives are to be preferred.

Rhubarb is an excellent aperient in this disease, as it possesses a tonic as well as a laxative property. It is often objectionable on account of its astringent nature. This may be obviated by combining it with magnesia or either of the alkalies or their carbonates or with soap.

A combination of Lac Sulphuris and Magnesia in equal parts, is recommended as a laxative, admirably suited to such a state of the bowels as usually exists in dyspepsia

The Bile of the Ox dried in a dish by the heat of a sand bath

Waltham

New London

is said to act as a certain and active Laxative, and may perhaps in some cases be advantageously prescribed.

Aloes. are regarded by some as a useful Laxative in dyspepsia.

Pills formed of a combination of Laxatives are highly useful in this dis-ease. Lee's pills are of this kind.

As dyspepsia is often of long continuance, it is necessary that the patient should endeavour to have a daily evacuation without the employment of cathartics. If the patient depends entirely upon Laxatives, for unloading the bowels, their use becomes habitual. Dr. Percival attended an elderly Lady in her last illness, who had been, for thirty years, in the habit of taking every night about bed time, a quantity of Rhubarb, to move her bowels.

When the discharges are fatid and of a dark colour, indicating a disordered state of the biliary secretion, the alterative use of Mercury is highly beneficial.

Another indication is, to restore tone to the stomach and bowels. A variety of tonic articles have been resorted to for this purpose.

The Peruvian Bark has been much employed, but its effects are not always satisfactory. "Dyspepsia from an obstructed state of the chylo-poietic viscera, certainly would not be benefitted by it, and even

when dependent on mere debility of the stomach, to which it would seem most appropriate. I have not found it to be more oppressing than indigestion that arises, and sometimes exciting nausea and unnecessary distress" &c.

The Cinchona or Bark will not be found to answer much better than the Bark in substance, as in the proper dose, it is too astringent to the stomach.

Gentian is a bitter tonic, it may be used in powder, or in a extract. If the patient has contracted habits of chewing tobacco and finds it a pretty dispensable substitute or relief the habit should be discouraged.

Camomile flowers are a tonic and a suitable substitute to coffee. The infusion is mild (I not found the expression) pure tonic and is soothing to the stomach.

The bitter tinctures, the tinctures of Myrrh the Aromatic tinctures and Ardent Spirits are to be avoided, for they are not the medicines which are to be used to invigorate the digestive organs by stimulating the stomach to increase its action, thereby the performance of its functions. They may mitigate the distressing symptoms, though they will not, even when taken in complete cure of the

disease. Their effects, ~~unhappily~~ it is well known, are but too sad. After the excitement which they have caused has subsided; the evil-doers are with ~~grief~~ if not additional misery. The patient again and again resorts to his excitator, & incapable increasing the dose; and receives at his charge, while it is too late, the becomes enslaved under the tyranny of that merciless destroyer of all that is great and noble in the human character. Habitual intemperance.

Was authority wanted to corroborate this statement; we have it in the almost daily instances of the fate of dyspeptics who have sought relief from any of these articles. We have it, in the testimonies of the most respectable and enlightened physicians.

The following anecdote which exhibits the science & opinions of the justly celebrated Dr Pelmegile, in a true light, deserves to be generally known.

A Young student in London, in the course of a conversation he had with Dr Pelmegile, was informed of the unfortunate situation of his son, the poor youth had derived from the use of ardent spirits, and of

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Previous, however, to the delivery of [illegible] from [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] called upon him, in order to ascertain the [illegible] he might have received from that examination, in favour of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] that he was considered [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Tea Tree. The infusion of the leaf is often a useful gargle. It is peculiarly adapted to that form of the disease which arises from intemperance in the use of ardent drinks.

The Rhexia is an astringent, and has the reputation of being useful in diarrhœa.

Fever Bush Cardinus, or Wedge Tree. This is the reputation of one used in Tennessee for intermittent fevers. It is also given in the form of infusion in wine.

Fever Nut tree. This reputation possesses considerable power. Its dose is small and then it is conveniently exhibited in pills.

Fever Root tree. This description must be done imperfectly at this period, and is addressed to the same purpose.

Fever Fuchsia. This vegetable was lately been introduced into practice, as an active purgative, diuretic, and diaphoretic, and greatly extolled as a remedy in intermittent fever, has not yet, to my knowledge been examined in Virginia. But if it really deserves the encomiums which Dr. Cornwall gives it as a tonic, it will not be long before we hear of its being a very valuable remedy in this complaint.

Ferri Limatura. The iron given in its pure state in the form of iron filings is thought by some, to be better adapted to digestion, than either its oxides or its salts. This is far from being the general opinion although, when the iron is exhibited in this state, it is unquestionably sometimes productive of much benefit.

But a tonic to aid either in dyspepsia, is exercise. Be it of what kind it may, it should not be employed immediately after a meal. It should commence gently, according to the ability of the patient to bear it.

Cheerful company, by withdrawing the attention of the patient from his sufferings; and by the stimulation of spirits which it causes, often contributes to invigorate the system.

Change of scene, and of air, in many cases of dyspepsia.

The waters of sodium and iron springs are much celebrated for their tonic power. The advantage derived from a visit to such springs, is not to be entirely attributed to the use of them unless in case, it draws at home, it would not be conducive of the same benefit. The exercise of the ride, the change of scene, mingling with company, the excursions and the change of scene often assist in bringing about a cure.

By increasing the excitement of the cutaneous vessels, which in this disease are generally in a torpid state, the system will be invigorated. The excitement of the cutaneous vessels may be increased, by the use of

The cold bath. If after the employment of active baths, the consequence should be a glow over the whole surface, but if we have reason to believe that from debility of the patient, reaction will not soon take place, or that it will be irregular or partial, we may resort to the

Warm bath to which stimulating articles, such, mustard &c. may be added. This should always be taken in a warm room. After coming out, the patient is to be wiped perfectly dry.

Frictions with a flannel or brush, either alone or aided by some stimulating article, may be, sometimes, advantageously employed.

To procure the cutaneous excitement, as well as to protect the patient from the vicissitudes of the weather, flannel should be worn next to the skin.

The feet of dyspeptics are generally cold, owing to the Can-

-guidness of the circulation through them. The cuticle of the feet is in a state, very disposing to the production, and also tends to irritate the nerves. To prevent, or at least to obviate the ill effects of this unwholesome state of the skin, the wearing a pair of flannel socks or woollen stockings, the inner surface of which, have been rubbed with Cayenne pepper three times. By means of the dryness and insensibility of the skin, the pepper would not take effect. The feet should be washed in warm water rendered somewhat stimulating by the addition of salt mustard or ashes. After the feet should be wiped dry and again introduced into the flannel stockings. This treatment applied to the feet of a healthy person, would produce a sensation of burning, almost intolerable, but in those of a diseased state it never produces more than a pleasant glow.

There are several affections attendant on dyspepsia, which more demand notice, as first,

Cardialgia or Heart Burn. This is an extremely distressing affection, arising from the presence of acid in the stomach.

The Sub-Nitrate of Bismuth, has been recommended as affording considerable relief. Although it has undoubtedly been of service

in some instances. Little confidence is to be placed in it. By the physicians in this city.

As cardialgia arises from the presence of acid in the stomach, it may be relieved by combining the acid in the stomach with Kali or an alkaline earth. The following preparations are among those most frequently employed.

The Alkaline Infusion. This though a new one, is at times a very valuable remedy. It seems not only to palliate this distressing symptom by neutralizing the acid in the stomach, but also by giving tone to the stomach to contribute to the cure of the disease. It is prepared in the following manner. To a quart of Chicken stones add a tea-cup full of pot: a gallon of boiling water is to be added. These articles placed in the vessel with well bottles, then allowed to stand for two or three hours, when the liquid is to be decanted for use.

The Fixed alkalies and their carbonates are often employed, and may be given in solution, pills or julap, or in the form of soap.

The carbonate of ammonia is frequently employed with advantage. It is exhibited in solution, the aqua carbonatis ammoniae or in pills

Equal parts of lime-water and milk form an excellent remedy in these cases.

Magnesia is well adapted to these cases, where constipation exists.

The carbonates of potash and soda, in solution, are useful, when a laxative effect is not desirable.

Vomiting is another extreme of disturbance of the stomach, followed by a flow of watery fluid from the mouth. This fluid is sometimes of such an acid quality, as to set the teeth on edge as if the mouth had been rinsed with highly diluted nitric acid.

The emetic is recommended in these cases, not only to evacuate the stomach, but also by its salutary effects upon the circulation, to produce a more healthy action. Some cases yield to the first emetic, the larger number require two or three. But where emetics have not produced any permanent good effect, it would be improper to continue their use, as the disadvantage in this direction among these, the

Sub. Nitrate of Bismuth is an article which in these cases

recommended. Its standing in this affection is the same as in cardialgia.

The antacids just mentioned as useful in cardialgia are often of service in pyrosis. Opium is useful as a palliative.

Gastrodynia is an extremely painful affection, which sometimes accompanies dyspepsia. A number of antispasmodics have been recommended for its relief. Of these opium is the best.

New milk is sometimes exhibited with advantage.

Distending the stomach with tepid water often proves beneficial, not less so, than taking a small quantity of boiling water. The former is supposed to act by relaxing, the latter by stimulating the stomach.

If the spasm should be alarming, & if it does not yield to these remedies, a blister should be applied over the stomach. This is often productive of great advantage.

A number of articles are recommended as useful in preventing a recurrence of the paroxysm. Among these are: Hinc Fem. Pari proprietatis. Warners Cordial. Vol. Tinct. Guiac. Spirit of Sulphuric Ether. Sub Nitrate of Bismuth.

Flatulence. Dyspeptic patients are often much troubled with accumulations of flatus in the bowels, giving rise to what

is commonly termed flatulent colic. In its treatment opium and ether are useful. It is the habit of ingestion either alone or combined with the oil of mint. in the dose of 15 to 30 drops of the former with ½ of the latter. This may be taken in a little powdered sugar.

The aromatics are much improved in the mode of their application. Ginger tea, mint tea &c are modes of exhibition. Acidity is generally, in these cases some acidity in the mouth, night it is not uncommon to exhibit an aromatic in combination with an antacid.

Should the affection be very distressing a more energetic, fomentation with hot brandy, or the application of a mixed plaster to the abdomen will be found useful

Diet. It is necessary to pay strict attention to the diet, in dyspepsia. It should be simple and easy of digestion. Milk does not agree well with a dyspeptic stomach. Sometimes when milk will not be well received by the stomach, cream will answer well, broths raw oysters cocoa are generally well received, more solid diet to be gradually resumed. Chocolate when properly prepared often answers well to break-

fast instead of coffee. Coffee and green tea should be prohibited. At times the patient may eat, fish, mutton, & fowl & white poultry or game, but veal, lamb, pork and all shellfish are to be forbidden. So should fried victuals & fish meat of any kind, as the nourishment enters into it covers them, it causes indigestion. There is no species of dessert which is not objectionable. Pastry is inadmissible. Crackers, stale bread, or bread made of unbolted flour (which in fact is of a laxative nature & readily digestible) may be used. Butter is to be allowed. It is a common opinion that dry toast is injurious. But this is not the case, as it is very apt to undergo the acetous fermentation, and is very difficult of digestion. Rice is a most excellent article of food and should be used freely.

For the drink it is best for a dyspeptic is water. Good pound Malaga, old Sherry or Port wine may sometimes be allowed. The sour wines are injurious. As the article of drink be what it may, the patient should use but little. Ginger tea is an excellent drink when there is much distress of stomach immediately after eating & between meals. It

produces much the same palliative effects as Brandy, and water without leading to the same Baneful consequences.

It may now be proper to say a few words concerning the necessity which exists, in some cases of dyspepsia, of a departure from the common rules of practice. Sometimes a patient will suffer a long time under dyspepsia, and although he should attend strictly to the injunctions of his physician yet his health may not be much improved, when suddenly the stomach will crave some particular kind of food, and this craving will be constant and in some instances almost unconquerable. This Dr Parish denominates the language of the stomach, and he thinks that the gratification of this desire is often attended with beneficial effects.

"But there is a false language of the stomach, arising from a petulant and fretful disposition. The patient seeing others around him enjoying themselves, sets to work to contrive what he may eat, and in in a short time will have fixed perhaps on a dozen articles of food. If he indulges in the use of any one of them. he generally suffers for it. But where there is a constant craving for one kind of food,

you will rarely do wrong in allowing it to your patient." Private Lecture

It is only after the disease has for sometime resisted a systematic plan of treatment, that the Dr advises a resort to this practice, in support of which he relates the following among other anec-dotes of a similar kind

Dr Kuhn attended a gentleman in this city, C.... S.... with dyspepsia. His stomach was very acid. the Dr gave him antacids and was particular in his dietetic plan of treatment. But for a long time the disease baffled every plan of treatment. when suddenly the stomach demanded pickles and vine-gar. The appetite was indulged and the patient recovered.

Such is the description and treatment of the more common forms of dyspepsia. There are other forms of it which demand a somewhat different treatment. But as it would be consum-ming time unnecessarily for me to attempt to give an account of them, since they are so well described elsewhere. I shall now conclude my brief essay with this remark: that proper ex-ercise and regulation of the diet are circumstances which demand the strictest attention, without which all our remedies will be of little avail—